

VZCZCXYZ0009
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0383 0780938
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 180938Z MAR 08
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8399
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7964
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 9218

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000383

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage March 18 on the presidential election campaigns; on various circles in Taiwan that support Tibet; and on the fall of global stocks after the sale of Bear Stearns and an emergency cut of a key lending rate by the U.S. Federal Reserve. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" ran a banner headline on page three saying "Big U.S. Fed Movement; Global Financial Markets Frightened and Suspicious" and published a whole page of stories on reactions from financial markets.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said there are four possible factors that will determine whether DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh or KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou's is elected president. A commentary in the pro-unification "United Daily News" criticized the DPP's opposition to the "one-China market" proposed by the KMT. The commentary, however, cited the example of the DPP government opening the local market to U.S. beef and pork and criticized the DPP government for having a double standard in policy-making when dealing with China versus the U.S. End summary.

A) "The Final Factors Deciding Ma or Hsieh's Victory or Loss"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (3/18):

"... With four days left, a few factors will decide victory or loss. (1) Whether light-green voters turn out and support Hsieh. If it happens as it did in the legislative elections, with many abstaining or committing apostasy and voting for Ma, then Hsieh will lose. (2) Voters in the middle of the political spectrum might possibly be a key minority, although there are not many of them. The impact of their abstention will not be a big one. Nonetheless, if many of them vote for Ma, Hsieh will definitely lose. If many of them vote for Hsieh, Hsieh will not necessarily win but might have a chance. (3) It depends on how the [KMT's platform of the] one-China market ferments. If it ferments [i.e. boils over] seriously, Hsieh will have a chance; if not seriously, Ma will definitely win. (4) Ma's camp had better pray that the Chinese Communist military does not massacre Tibetans as during the Tiananmen Square protests. Otherwise, if [the Chinese crackdown in Tibet] turns out to be a major international event, it will definitely affect Ma's campaign. ..."

B) "Enough! Do Not Treat Voters Like Idiots"

Journalist Peng Hui-ming wrote in the "United Notes" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (3/18):

"Recently the Green camp has fiercely attacked the 'one-China market' topic and emphasizes that if the Blue camp [presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou] is elected, China's cheap labor will take all the jobs of Taiwan's workers, and the Mainland's dangerous

products will sicken Taiwan people whenever they touch them. With campaigns going on fervently, one of the strategies is to attack the rival's policy weaknesses. However, distorting facts deliberately and engaging in demagoguery is not only politically immoral but also is a way of looking down at voters. ...

"Furthermore, dangerous products made in China which have caused problems in various countries in recent years have in fact destroyed the reputation of products 'made in China.' However, does the government of Taiwan, as a consumer country, use the same yardstick to check on imported goods? U.S. beef is under the shadow of mad cow disease. The government, however, vied to be the first to allow the import without caring about people's food safety. Regarding U.S. pork containing ractopamine, [the government] even amended the law especially to [U.S. pork's] advantage. The Green camp slams Chinese products for hurting people but uses a double-standard to deal with dangerous products [from the U.S.]. ..."

YOUNG